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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General says tensions remain high in Croatia and hostilities could continue; reports Croatian Army used peace-keepers and Serb prisoners as human shields.

* United Nations says Croatian offensive has created 150,000 refugees; hopes to secure agreement on safe passage for people still trapped by fighting.

* President of Disarmament Conference stresses need for progress in talks on nuclear-test-ban treaty; Germany voices concern at French decision to conduct nuclear tests in Pacific.

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Tensions remain high following the Croatian offensive in Sectors North and South and the possibility of continuing hostilities cannot be ruled out, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a letter to the Security Council President dated August 7, he said that a refugee crisis of major proportions had already started and that the United Nations was attempting to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population.

The Secretary-General noted that the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) had suffered a total of 18 casualties, all of which had been protested. Three peace-keepers -- two Czechs and a Dane -- had been killed, and he conveyed his condolences to the Governments and people of the Czech Republic and Denmark. He also noted that Croatian Army units had twice used peace-keepers and Serb prisoners as human shields as they conducted their attacks. Those incidents had been vigorously protested by the United Nations and the troop-contributors concerned.

On 6 August in Geneva, Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic had expressed confidence that the Croatian military operation would be completed within 24 hours, the Secretary-General said. He had also indicated that Croatia would investigate incidents in which United Nations troops had been attacked and given assurances about humanitarian access to civilians displaced by the fighting.

(more)

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The fighting in Croatia has created an estimated 150,000 refugees, a United Nations spokesman said today. That figure included 30,000 who had arrived in the Banja Luka area of Bosnia and Herzegovina or who had moved on into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A large number of people were still trapped in Sectors North and South, including 30,000 in Topusko. There were also indications of movements out of the Bihac pocket, possibly by supporters of rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic.

The United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were focusing on negotiating safe passage for people trapped by the fighting, and hoped that an agreement might be concluded by the end of the day. However, Croatia had not given permission for relief supplies to enter Bihac or Banja Luka through its territory, and the UNHCR hoped that convoys could reach those areas tomorrow from the east. There were reports that Croatian forces had fired on refugees from the ground and the air, but the agency was unable to systematically interview refugees to evaluate those reports.

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The President of the Conference on Disarmament, Shirchinjavyn Yumjav (Mongolia), has stressed the need for progress in multilateral negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. As the Conference began the third part of its third session in Geneva, he said a number of substantive issues must be resolved as soon as possible. They included scope, entry into force, withdrawal, verification and institutional issues.

The representative of Germany said a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would strengthen the future role of the Conference. He also expressed concern about France's decision to conduct nuclear tests in the Pacific. Germany had always held the view that nuclear test moratoria were most important for successful negotiations in Geneva.

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